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ART AND PROGRESS

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CITY PLANNING

Whether we are wiser in our generation than those who directly preceded us remains for future historians to decide, but certainly in some things we are more forehanded. Some few cities in America have the distinction of having been deliberately planned, but the majority have grown up in a haphazard fashion according to the Topsy tradition. L'Enfant's plan for the City of Washington is said to have inspired the replanning of Paris under Baron Haussmann, and without doubt the revival of this plan by the Burnham Park Commission kindled anew the fire of enthusiasm for city improvement which in the past ten years has spread the length and breadth of this land. The necessity of having a plan which will serve as a guide for gradual improvement, insuring continuity of effect, is more and more being realized and the interest which has been awakened is shaping itself in tangible results. The first week in May a

City Planning Conference will be held in Rochester, when such vital questions for the public good as the avoidance of congestion of population and improvement of traffic facilities will be discussed by those who have made a special study of these subjects. Before many weeks a City Plan Exposition will be held at Stuttgart, Germany, at which a special feature will be models of the great industrial establishments of Berlin showing their location in conjunction with the railroads and canals. In London in July under the patronage of the King a large Town Planning Conference is to be held by the Royal Society of British Architects with the object of acquiring as well as spreading information that will make most effective the advantages offered by the new Town Planning Law. From both Germany and England have come requests for exhibits of American city plans—not, perhaps, because America has excelled in city building, but because she has had visions, and the courage of conviction. Up to the present time more has been done in the way of planning than in execution. But, as Inigo Triggs has said, it is much less important where we now stand than in what direction we are moving. It is not the municipal ledger, but the things hoped for, that signify. Within the last few years, in this land, city planning has taken form as a big conception, concrete and at the same time comprehensive. Plans have been made looking toward the future and showing a realization of the value of utility and convenience as well as beauty. This requires more than a knowledge of art, of engineering, of architecture—for the city problem, of necessity, involves the people, their health, convenience, and uplift. As it is estimated that a third of the population of the United States is found in cities of over eight thousand inhabitants it may well be supposed that to a great extent the welfare of the Nation is dependent upon it. In specific reform America has not gone as far as Germany or England. The tenement house problem and the workingman's village have found in this country comparatively poor solution, but in the broad aspect they are now being given

place. That it pays has been incontrovertibly demonstrated, and it is the business men that are now securing from experts plans. All that is needed for fulfillment is co-operation on the part of the planners and the people. Through this agency the dreams which now seem far off, but are in reality of substantial fabric, will come true.

COMMERCIAL BLIGHT

The spirit of commercialism is dominant in the present age and it has pervaded the field of art as well as the courts of literature. Primarily it stimulates but eventually it blights. Many an artist has been spurred to effort through the necessity of earning a living, and so far no harm is done. Sales are a substantial mark of appreciation and every laborer is entitled to his hire. Even competition in itself is not evil—quickening endeavor and lending the zest of excitement. So long as the artist loves his work more than gold and gives his best all is well. These are normal conditions. But the tendency today is to overestimate the value of those things which money can buy, to look upon luxuries as necessities. The price of living has increased and life itself has become more complicated. In New York exorbitant prices are charged for studios because of the enormous value of land, so that an artist is under the necessity of selling his pictures, if not painting pictures to sell, to avoid being plunged into debt. And to do this he must keep pace with his neighbors, must entertain and be entertained. This produces an abnormal condition of living which cannot, it would seem, be conducive to the production of art. In architecture, also, the effect is felt, and in perhaps even greater degree, the architect's dealings being chiefly with business men on a commercial basis. To ward off the insidious influence, the architects themselves have framed a code of ethics, more honored, however, it would sometimes seem, in the breach than the observance. According to this code it is unprofessional for an architect to advertise or to solicit commissions, and yet

there are so many ways of accomplishing these ends that it would perhaps be hard to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. But there are bigger crimes which a commercialized standard countenances—a matter of profits, of commissions, of unearned rewards. And the pity of it is that the punishment will not accrue merely to the guilty. It is not solely a question of morals but of expediency; for though at the present time no harm may seem to accrue, we can be assured that art will not continue to flower in such an atmosphere—that the touch of commercialism withers if it does not kill.

FREE ART.

The old battle cry of those warring against the tariff on art has not been heard for some time now—long enough perhaps to have lost its special significance. If so, all the better; for, after all, it has a bigger meaning. Now that the tariff has been removed, or largely so, is art free? Has it become the common property of the common people? In a measure, yes, through the museums and the generosity of the collectors, but not in an altogether democratic sense. The tariff did not have much to do with that. As Hanna Astrup Larsen has said in an article entitled "The Beauty Hunger of the Poor," in a recent issue of *Harper's Weekly*, "the older people of the immigrant class have lost whatever their native villages might hold of picturesqueness, while they do not know how to make use of what America offers them. Too ignorant of "free days" and timid of marble steps they do not often find their way into the art galleries where pictures and statues might speak to them in the universal language of beauty. Yet even in very wretched homes the ineradicable thirst for something that should bear a message of loveliness will pierce through the filth and squalor." Many of these people, it is true, are now being reached through the schools, but they can all be reached through the municipalities. A little more beauty can be brought architecturally into the homes, and a good deal more into the streets. It is worth while doing things occasionally merely for the